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SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF

MRS. JANE B. RENDALL,

LATE OF THE

AMERICAN MADURA MISSION,

DELIVERED AT

THE SANITARIUM, PULNEY HILLS.

MAY 17, 1868.

BY

REV. JAMES HERRICK.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

MADRAS:

PRINTED BY H. W. LAURIE, AT THE CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY'S PRESS,
No. 18, CHURCH STREET, VEPERY.
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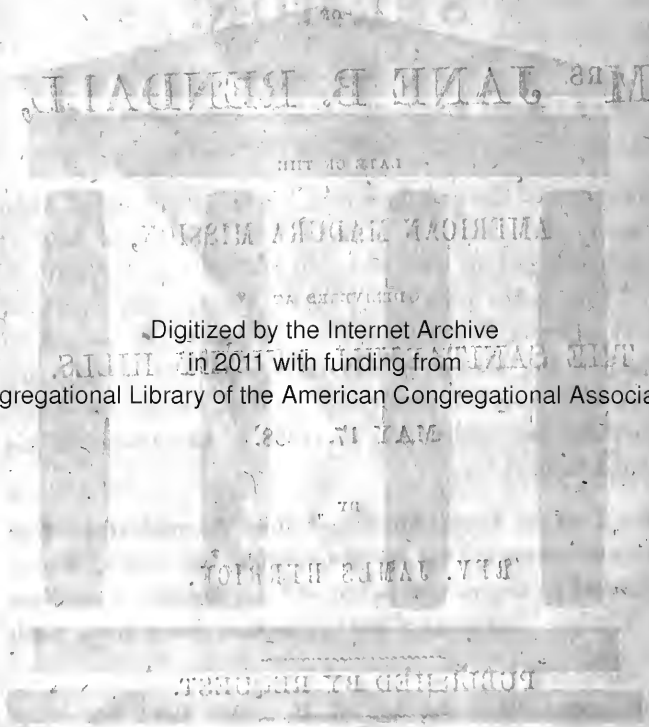

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SERMON.

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me.—2 Sam. i: 26.

JEALOUS of the popularity and influence of David, Saul earnestly endeavored to take his life. But "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." And though the death of David seemed the only event necessary to secure to Jonathan the throne of his father, yet he sought his safety with as much persistance as Saul sought his death, more than once delivering him out of the hands of his enraged father.

The love of Jonathan was indeed "wonderful;" and it is not strange that on hearing of his death, David exclaimed in anguish of spirit, "I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me."

Often since that day has death called forth the same or similar expressions of grief. "No one of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

Such is our natural constitution and our relation to one another, that much of our present happiness as well as our usefulness, arises from our mutual dependence. Any member of a family has it in his power to do much

for the happiness of all the rest. The same thing is true in a great measure of the neighborhood.

Christians in any country, united to one another by the union of each to Christ, are able to do much; and, if faithful, will do much, to promote each other's happiness and usefulness. This is especially true of the members of the same church or society, who meet frequently for the discharge of common duties and the enjoyment of common privileges.

In regard to many things, foreign missionaries are a class by themselves. Separated widely from their relatives and early companions, exposed to similar dangers and trials, and having many interests in common, the members of a mission are peculiarly dependent upon each other. Of such a community it may be emphatically said that "no one liveth to himself." The sympathy, the aid, the co-operation, the prayers of one are indispensable to the happiness and the highest usefulness of another. And when persons so connected are fitted by natural endowments, education, and grace, to labor together harmoniously, the soul of one often becomes knit with the soul of another in sympathy and love, the strength of which is seldom known except on missionary ground. A breach made, by death, in such a circle, is the occasion of no common grief.

Some of us remember the sorrow, the *distress*, caused by the sudden death of the lamented RAGLAND, especially to his companion in labor and bosom friend, with him at the time, who, in writing of the event, compared himself to Elisha, as he was situated after Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

When the life of DAVID C. SCUDDER, who appeared among us as a sun-beam for a little time, was suddenly

put out, what one of his fellow laborers was not ready to exclaim, "I am distressed for thee my brother; very pleasant hast thou been unto me."

And how many, besides the immediate associates of our beloved sister, Mrs. RENDALL, were "distressed" on hearing of her death a few months ago. Mr. Hunt, late of Madras, in a recent letter to a member of this mission, said, "We heard of the death of dear sister Rendall at Buffalo. I have seldom felt so stunned, and fancy we all felt much alike—a peculiar and strange feeling of sadness that sister *Rendall* should die."

The feelings of each of her associates and of many others at the present time, on reflecting upon her character and life, and calling to mind her repeated acts of kindness, find appropriate utterance in the words, "very pleasant hast thou been unto me."

After the statement of a few facts, I shall invite your attention to some of the traits of character in our departed sister, on account of which she was unusually pleasant as an associate, and useful as a laborer, in the missionary work.

Mrs. JANE B. RENDALL, daughter of Dea. E. Ballard, was born in Athol, Mass., U. S. A., on the 4th of March, 1826. Faithfully instructed by a pious mother, she was hopefully converted at the age of eight years, and received to the Congregational church in her native town. Soon after this, her parents moved, with their family, to Quincy, Illinois, at that time a new state, in the "far West." Here she became a member of the church under the pastoral care of the Rev. David Nelson, distinguished as the author of the book entitled "The Cause and Cure of Infidelity."

This godly man is believed to have done much, as

her pastor, during those early years, towards the formation of her Christian character, and her preparation for her future self-denying work. And his influence as pastor was not his only influence over her. "Her studies," says one of her sisters, "were pursued in a school founded by him for the education of young men and women pledged to devote their lives to the building up of the Redeemer's kingdom—a 'MISSION INSTITUTE,' in spirit, as it was in name."

The following testimony respecting her at that time, though given by a sister, will not be suspected of untruthfulness or extravagance, by those who knew her here:

"Endowed with an excellent mind, in which good practical sense and untiring application were prominent characteristics, she became a fine classical scholar, while her ingenuousness, cheerfulness, and musical talent, everywhere attracted to her friends."

At the age of nineteen, she became the wife of the Rev. JOHN RENDALL, then under appointment of the American Board, to the Madura Mission.

Myself and wife met her and her husband, for the first time, in a railway carriage, on the afternoon of November 4, 1845,—they, like ourselves, being on the way to the place of embarkation for this country. Eight days later, we four, another missionary and his wife for Madura, and two missionaries, their wives and an unmarried lady for Jaffna, embarked for Madras. Mrs. Rendall was the youngest of our large company, and she has been the first to die.

After a voyage of one hundred and thirty-five days, we reached Madras, March 28, 1846, and at the end of

April, arrived in Madura. In May, Mr. and Mrs. Rendall were appointed to what was then the station of Dindigul West; were transferred to Dindigul East on the departure of Mr. Lawrence, near the end of the same year, and remained there till July, 1849. They were then removed to Madura, where, with the exception of a little less than two years, spent by Mrs. Rendall in visiting the United States, she remained till July last, eighteen years, engaged, with little interruption, in toilsome labor in behalf of her own household, the female boarding school, her associates, and not a few others, who at different times enjoyed her hospitality.

In pursuance of the plan before proposed, I remark first, that Mrs. Rendall was pleasant and useful, because her associates had entire confidence in her: confidence not only in her justice and integrity, her purity of purpose, but also in a trait less common than these, her *discretion.* I venture to say that no one of her female associates, after forming an acquaintance with her, ever hesitated to ask her advice, or to speak with her in regard to matters of the greatest delicacy, or involving important interests, from the fear that she might imprudently repeat what had been said, to the disadvantage of any one.

I remark secondly, that Mrs. Rendall was pleasant and highly useful, because her general character and attainments were such as to fit her for any place, which, in the judgment of others, the highest interests of the cause in which she was engaged in common with them, required that she should fill. She was one of those persons to be relied upon in emergencies.

Again: the following characteristics, apparent from the first to her ship-mates, viz., an amiable, cheerful

disposition, warm sympathy, genuine kindness, eagerness for the work to which she had consecrated her life, together with good health, all conspired in a high degree, to make her a pleasant associate and a useful laborer.

The blessing of health, as most of us know, was continued in a remarkable degree, till near the end of her life. This, with other qualities possessed by her, enabled her to perform an amount of labor, both physical and mental, rarely performed by a lady in such a climate as this.

Cheerfulness, resulting partly from nature, and partly from grace, manifested by her when bidding adieu to friends and native land, was a striking characteristic all along her earthly pilgrimage. The many annoyances and discomforts, inseparable from a long sea-voyage, were met not only without a word of complaint, but with uniform cheerfulness.

Fond of vocal music, and much skilled in the practice of it, she was ever ready at our appointed seasons to engage with others in this exercise, whether for mutual improvement or for relieving the tedium of sea-life. She was equally prompt also in the observance of our seasons for study, and those appointed for religious exercises.

Arrived in this country, she readily adapted herself to things as she found them here. Inclined always to look upon the "bright side"—to make the best of every thing—neither the climate nor the numerous perplexities which all must experience, more or less, at first, in their intercourse with the natives, had any apparent tendency to produce discouragement or moroseness.

If her spirits became somewhat less buoyant towards

the last, it was only because she had borne heavy burdens, and borne them long.

From her natural kindness, as well as earnest love—one of the "fruits of the Spirit"—she manifested, while at sea, unusual interest both in the physical and the spiritual welfare of the sailors,—the conversion of one of whom, there was reason to attribute in a great measure to her instrumentality. Her kindness attracted the special notice of the commander of our ship, who often made it the subject of remark to others.

Kindness—love, evinced by deeds, were marked characteristics of her until she went out from us to return no more. Yes, and we know that so long as her heart continued to throb, it throbbed with love—that so long as she had strength to act, her acts were acts of kindness.

How many proofs of her kindness and love toward ourselves and our children, can we, her fellow-laborers, call to mind! How many have we experienced which have passed from our memory.

Persons who have enjoyed her hospitality for a day, or who have been so situated as to render it possible for her in any way to serve them, have been made sensible of the same marked traits in her character.

Love for Christ, and those for whom He died, which made her eager for her chosen work, before entering upon it, made her love it after it became a reality, and happy in it even to the end.

As I accompanied her from her own door in Madura, to the carriage that was waiting to bear her away, I alluded to the length of time which we, who came together at first, had been associated in the missionary work. "A long time," said she; "and our missionary life has

been very pleasant—has it not?" Her missionary life was pleasant to her because she loved the people, and delighted to labor for their salvation.

Having good health from the outset, with a quick, well cultivated mind, and an ear capable of distinguishing sounds with great accuracy, she early made such attainments in the Tamil language as enabled her to communicate with the natives with great freedom—understanding whatever they wished to say to her, and making her own thoughts clearly known to them. This attainment, with the disposition she always showed to do them good, and the uniformity she manifested in her intercourse with them, avoiding the very common mistake of treating them alternately with undue kindness and too great severity, attached the natives to her, and gave her power over them gained by comparatively few. Here is found the cause why so many, heathen as well as Christians, sincerely lament her death.

I remark again, that *confidence in others*, was a prominent and very pleasant trait in the character of Mrs. Rendall. Herself possessed of a character remarkably pure and transparent, she was slow to suspect others of any inclination to appear to be what they were not in reality—of being actuated by motives or principles, to which she was herself a stranger. She was always ready in her intercourse with others, to put the best construction upon every thing, having in active exercise charity which "thinketh no evil; believeth all things; hopeth all things."

Nearly allied to this, was *catholicity*. She was remarkably free from narrow mindedness or bigotry. By this remark, I do not mean that she was inclined to be liberal, or lax, in regard to her own system of religious

belief, nor that she was inclined to fellowship persons of doubtful faith or character. Nor that she was indifferent in respect to the peculiarities by which the various sects of evangelical Christians are distinguished. She had well defined preferences in matters of this kind. But while she claimed for herself the right of choice she was ready to accord the same to others, and receive to her heart all who bore the image of the Lord Jesus, though belonging to a different branch of His church from the one with which she was connected. She had no disposition to contend about things generally acknowed by the disciples of Christ, to be non-essential.

Another marked excellence in the character of Mrs. Rendall, was *frankness*. Though neither obtrusive, nor indifferent to the opinions of others, yet she formed her opinions independently, and was accustomed to express them, when there was a call for it, freely and unequivocally. No one ever felt a doubt as to her sentiments concerning an important subject, in regard to which it was proper for her to make them known. If she was ever led by this trait of character to utter words by which she seemed forward in giving reproof, she certainly did not speak them in the exercise of a censorious spirit, and it is highly probable they were well worthy of consideration. It should also be said, in this connection, that if she was more ready than some to speak to individuals of things in regard to which she supposed a word of caution needful, she was less inclined than most, to speak of them to others.

Another important trait was *patience*—patience severely tried, not unfrequently, but never failing: patience without which she could not have performed the manifold duties of almost every day: patience combined with firmness and decision, in the treatment of her own

children, the members of the female boarding school, and many other natives, older in years, but in many respects like children, by which she gained their confidence, their love, and their obedience to her wishes. It is rare indeed, that a person of so much energy and decision as she possessed, has so much patience also: rare that a lady occupies a place for eighteen years, demanding so much energy, decision, and patience combined, as the place she filled. It was this happy combination that enabled her to do so much and to do it so well: to meet the requests and execute the orders she was constantly receiving, with so little confusion—so much accuracy and dispatch.

I remark again, that *good judgment* was a prominent trait in the character of Mrs. Rendall. In regard to this, as to some other faculties possessed by her, it may be said that while surpassed by few of her own sex in gentleness, she was endowed with the strength of a man. Indeed, there are comparatively few men whose opinion upon an important question connected with the missionary work, is worthy of more respect than hers was She manifested this trait in the discharge of all the important duties mentioned above; and, though it is not necessary to speak of her hospitality, since it was proverbial, we may refer to the good judgment manifested in the exercise of it. Her guests were ever made to feel that they were welcome to her house and her table. And they were also made to feel that their presence was not the occasion of great extra trouble. This was highly important, both as relieving the minds of her guests of uneasiness, and enabling her to "use hospitality" without interrupting, or greatly hindering other duties.

Another trait of great excellence in the character of

Mrs. Rendall, and the last I shall mention in this connection, was a *self-sacrificing spirit.* She was ever ready to stand in her lot. The very thought of asking another to bear a burden, or make a sacrifice, from which she would herself shrink, was abhorrent to her. Well fitted for any position which the interests of the common cause demanded that she should fill, she was ready to take the place assigned her. Selfishness and envy found no place in her bosom. To aspirations after worldly honor, she was a stranger. The honor of Christ—the good of others—these were the objects of her chief desire, and to promote which she was ready for any sacrifice. Did a mission family, from the illness of one of its members, need a place in her house that medical assistance might be near? A place was made ready, irrespective of inconvenience to herself or family. If a missionary sister, at a time of special trial, needed her sympathy and aid, she was ready to go to her by day or by night. This trait of her character, as well as her courage and general ability, finds a striking illustration in her visit to America before alluded to. The object of this visit was to provide homes for three of her five children, and make arrangements for their education. Unwilling that her husband should be taken from his work, she resolved, after a prayerful consideration of the subject, to go without him, much as she knew his sympathy and aid would be needed in the trying duties before her. The two younger children, little girls, could not well be separated from their mother for so long a time, and she decided to take them with her though it would be necessary to bring them back. As if the entire care of her own five children would not be a sufficient tax upon her strength—a sufficient test of her benevolence and readiness to deny self, she gladly took charge of two others, the eldest son of a member

of her own mission, and a motherless child of a missionary in Madras, rather than that they should suffer from being kept in this country, or that their parents should leave their work. With these seven children, two of them scarcely past the age of infancy, she left Madras for England in a sailing vessel, near the end of 1857. Two gentlemen of the American Mission in Jaffna, and an American missionary and his wife from Arcot, went in the same ship to England, and of course were able to give her sympathy and advice. From England to America, she went in a steamer, on board of which there was not a person besides the children with her, with whom she had the slightest acquaintance at the commencement of the voyage. On arriving in the city of New York, she committed the two children sent in her care to their parents' friends, and with her own five made a journey of a thousand miles to the home of her father in Illinois.

Having accomplished the object of her visit, she hastened back with her two younger children, taking a steamer to England, and thence a sailing vessel to Madras. She reached her home in Madura in less than two years from the time she left it, and gladly resumed her work. Though she did not seem to have suffered materially in health, yet, I think that most of us who were here at the time, felt that what she had passed through, had been too much for even her. She would not probably have given her advice for another lady to undertake the same.

Five years later, she was called to another struggle. The little girls brought back from America, had reached such an age that they must either return there, or suffer through life, from the effect of the climate here, and the want of proper advantages for education. The

struggle between maternal love with a sense of the duty she owed her daughters on the one hand, and her views of duty to the people here on the other, was most severe. But the missionary triumphed over the mother. She sent her daughters from her, as the sequel has proved, to see them no more in life.

It scarcely need be said that the traits of character which fitted her so highly for the work of a missionary, caused her to excel as a mother and wife. All who ever saw her in her own family circle, know that she was a kind, judicious mother, and that "the heart of her husband did safely trust in her."

Like the wives of many other missionaries, she relieved her husband, almost entirely, of the labor and care connected with the instruction of their children, and of most other domestic duties. And in the peculiar duties arising from the station he occupied, and the offices he was called to fill, she was accustomed to render such assistance as a husband could rarely expect to receive from a wife.

After what has already been said, much of which could not have been said had she not been a person of earnest piety, it is unnecessary to speak at length of her character as a Christian. Her Christian character was distinguished for symmetry, rather than for the special prominence of particular traits. She commenced cultivating the graces of the Christian when a mere child, and cultivated them all well. Her life was uniformly consistent with her profession both as a Christian and a missionary. She always manifested a simple, child-like faith, and an unusual reverence for the *law* of *God*. She was always prayerful and remarkably conscientious—an uncompromising enemy of wickedness wherever found.

She was "clothed with humility," "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." "The fruits of the Spirit," as enumerated by the Apostle Paul, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," were all found in her, and well matured.

An index to her feelings as a Christian is found in the character of the music and of the hymns which gave her most delight. The following were some of her favorite hymns:

"I lay my sins on Jesus."

"Just as I am without one plea."

"Nearer my God to thee,
Nearer to thee."

"Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say
Come unto me and rest."

Though great uniformity was apparent both in her spiritual exercises and her outward walk, during all the years that we knew and loved her, it was evident to those best acquainted with her, that her "path was as the shining light, that shineth more and more."

She went out from us ten months ago. With a good prospect, as we all thought; with an earnest wish, in which every one of her associates participated, that she might be permitted to return and engage again for years, in the work she loved so well. But in this we are disappointed. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth." She will not come back. We shall see her no more until the sea give up the dead which are in it.

It is for us to bow in submission: to give thanks to God that the people of this district had the benefit of

her labors; and we, that of her sympathy and aid, for so long a time; and that she has left us an example so well worthy of imitation. It is for us to give her afflicted husband, our beloved brother, and his children our sympathy and our prayers, and to commit ourselves with renewed earnestness to labor, and a preparation for rest. We should give the greater heed to this call, since by the death of Dr. Lord, another member of this mission, we are again reminded that "the night cometh when no man can work!"

Of the closing scene, there is little to be said; and I cannot do better than to copy the account given by the sister before alluded to, who must have learned most of the particulars mentioned, from the bereaved husband. She thus writes:

"In company with her husband, she was returning for a family reunion in the United States, hoping to have her dear ones for the first time together, expecting afterwards to go back to India for another score of years. The fond expectation, cherished by a large circle, was not to be realized. Her earthly work was done.

"After an illness of ten days, not considered dangerous by her medical advisers, her vital powers, enfeebled by long labor in a tropical climate, sunk. She died in the Mediterranean, a day and a half from Alexandria, September 4, 1867, aged forty-one years and six months. 'At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh.' Without time for a parting message or farewell, she breathed out her soul to God. But her end, though not expected by any on board, was not unanticipated by herself. After a night of great suffering on the Red Sea, she called her husband, and, after receiving necessary assistance, said she had been praying all night, and wished to pray with him. She then offered a most

simple, child-like prayer, casting herself and family on God, and praying that if it was His will, she might be spared. That night, when she wrestled in prayer alone, like her Savior in Gethsemane, her husband believes she struggled with the approaching death-angel, and was strengthened for the final ordeal. Her remains were interred in the unresting waters of the Mediterranean, in the sure belief that God careth for his own, and will restore them glorified at the Arch-angel's trump."

"Go to the grave in all thy glorious prime!
In full activity of zeal and power;
A Christian cannot die before his time;
The Lord's appointment is the servant's hour.

Go to the grave; at noon from labor cease;
Rest on thy sheaves, thy harvest-task is done;
Come from the heat of battle, and in peace,
Soldier! go home; with thee the fight is won.

Go to the grave; no, take thy seat above;
Be thy pure spirit present with the Lord,
Where thou for faith and hope hast perfect love,
And open vision for the written word."